

Staff Congress: At-A-Glance

December 7, 2015

Chair Report: Craig Dennis

Chair Dennis opened the meeting by stating we had scheduled a guest speaker (Dr. Janet McCoy), but would move on to the Chair's report. In the event Dr. McCoy was running late, reports would be suspended for her presentation on professional development. Chair Dennis reported there was a special President's Leadership Council meeting called last month regarding health care and open enrollment. Chair Dennis indicated he would defer to Harold Nally when he gives his Human Resource report later in the meeting to discuss this further.

Vice-Chair Report: Scott Niles

Vice-Chair Niles stated the Staff Congress portal site was up to date and will include all Staff Concerns covered during today's meeting. There have been no nominations for a New Staff Profile, but someone is being considered and Vice-Chair Niles is in the process of contacting that individual. Vice-Chair Niles continues to work with IT to put up pictures on the portal page, but IT has other work prioritized ahead of this portion of our project.

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Chair and Vice-Chair Reports
- 2 Committee Reports
- 4 Other Reports
- 5 Upcoming Eagle Events

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Committee Reports

Benefits & Compensation: Committee Chair Jerel Benton

* **Committee Chair Benton** informed representatives he had sent a list of issues from other employees to Harold Nally at the end of last week but had not received a reply as of today's meeting. The issues were: a request for a comparison sheet of MSU and other sister institutions regarding health care costs; confusion regarding the last date for the tobacco test—was it 11/30 or the end of the year as stated in the printed materials?; the cost of the increase to health insurance was stated to be 9.9% to employees, but the actual increase to employees was more than 9.9%; will there be any changes in how Wellness Points are handled in the upcoming year? Committee Chair Benton deferred the questions until Mr. Nally's report.

Credentials & Elections: Committee Chair Lora Pace

* **Committee Chair Pace** indicated the C&E committee met last week and had a final review of the new representation model. The first reading will be in January 2016, the second reading will be February 2016, and a vote will follow the second reading. The new representation model will be implemented in the next election in the spring. There was a question if a representative changes physical office space how that would impact the new model. The current wording needs to be revised and sent to the committee. Historically, the representative in this situation would immediately be removed from Staff Congress if their EEO category, physical location, etc., changed. Once this has been discussed further in committee, and changes are made to the wording, the changes will be brought forward to Congress. There was also a comment as to whether Staff Congress elections should be held with the top 'x' number of people getting votes being elected to serve regardless of area representation. The problem with this type of representation is there could be the potential to have a heavy concentration in area or job type.

Q: Will there be a decline in the number of representatives elected with the new model?

A: No, it is structured to keep 30 staff members—6 representatives from 5 different geographic areas.

When other regions were reviewed as to representation models, there was a hodge-podge of models used. For instance, ECU only has 15 Staff Congress members.

Staff Issues: Committee Chair Paige McDaniel

* **Committee Chair McDaniel** there many concerns submitted since the last Staff Congress meeting. Concerns were as follows:

1. **CONCERN:** I greatly appreciate that someone replaced all the clocks in Ginger Hall. It is unfortunate that they we all replaced right before time change as all clocks are now 1 hour fast.

RESPONSE from Richard Linio (AVP Facilities Management): This anonymous person needs to enter a work order to get the clocks fixed.

2. **CONCERN:** There were 5 concerns submitted regarding fixing the same pot hole in front of the Educational Services Building (formerly the Rowan County Courthouse).

RESPONSE from Jeremiah Gallegos, Director, Campus Services: Grounds has fixed the pothole at the Education Services Building. Thank you and have a great day.

3. **CONCERN:** I know the University and President Andrews is all about saving money to better the campus, but a Holiday Bonus would be wonderful this year. I can't explain how much this bonus helped my family and I. Just doesn't seem fair to give it to us for two years straight and then take it away. I know tons of employee's who wished this would happen this year. Don't mean to complain because I'm very thankful for my 15+ years here at MSU and all the wonderful incentives but a bonus sure would be nice. Thank you for reading my comments and your consideration would be appreciated. Thank You.

RESPONSE from Teresa Lindgren, Executive Director of Budgets & Financial Planning: There are no plans to provide a mid-year pay supplement this year. Prior to implementation of the salary compensation model that began in fiscal year 2013-14, a mid-year pay supplement of \$750 was provided in December 2010 and again in December 2011. The decision to provide those supplements was based on no recurring salary increases being provided in fiscal years 2009-10 and 2010-11. Additionally, the decision to provide the supplements in each year was contingent upon exceeding enrollment projections for the fall semesters. Given that recurring salary increases have been provided for the past three years with a cost of over \$6.2 million and that we have experienced enrollment declines in the past two years, a mid-year pay supplement is not being considered at this time. Please let me know if you have other questions or concerns.

4. **CONCERN:** The new Outlook continues to stall out when I am attempting to send an e-mail or view my calendar, or other calendars I have access too. Not all the time, but frequently enough to impact me getting the job done. In the title bar of whatever window I have open it says "Not Responding," or a message will appear that Outlook has lost connection to the server. I have to turn it off and start over. Everyone in my office has the same problem, no matter the age of their machine. Can we buy more bandwidth to the server, or just give up and go back to what we had before--that worked fine?

RESPONSE from Steve Richmond, Assistant Vice President for Technology: My apologies for my delayed response. Here it is: Due to there being countless factors that can be attributed to poor performance with Outlook 2013, The Office of Information Technology recommends you contact the Help Desk at 606-783-HELP. (4357) Taking this step will allow our technicians to look into the problem and provide an accurate diagnosis and recommendation for remediation. Unfortunately, there is no one reason for this type of issue and it must be dealt with on a case by case basis.

5. **CONCERN:** HR has announced that there is a 9.9% increase in our health care costs but my monthly payment for health care has increased much more than 9.9%. Can you please have them explain what the actual increases are?

RESPONSE from Harold Nally, Human Resources Director: No response was submitted prior to meeting.

6. **CONCERN:** As a staff person with kids I had planned to send to MSU, can anyone explain the new \$200.00 MSU Housing application fee?

RESPONSE from Dr. Christopher Summerlin, Director Housing & Residence Education: The change from a housing deposit to non-refundable application fee was made based on a number of different concerns which have been identified over the last several years. The purpose of changing from a deposit process to an application fee serves several functions.

1. The deposit refund process will no longer be a concern or issue for applicants/students in whether or not it will be returned based on date of rescinding application or status of room at check-out. Every year there are numerous complaints from parents and prospective students regarding wanting the deposit refunded despite canceling the assignment after the published deadline date or room condition. The fee should eliminate or at least reduce greatly the opportunity for additional charges or fees to be incurred thus reducing potential complaints from those we serve.
2. The application fee will show that applicants are more committed when completing the process of applying for housing. Every summer housing receives approximately 150-200 cancellations after housing assignments have been made for new applicants. These applicants often have no commitment to attending MSU and removing their assignments causes other students to often not get the assignment or roommate they desired. The assignment pool will now be more concrete and less likely to include students who are just using the housing application as a back-up plan for other options.
3. There will be less opportunity for applying small fees for damages, as part of this fee will cover minor wear and tear to apartments/rooms. Residents have often complained when small repairs need to be made, such as painting, slight holes in walls, etc. The fee will cover most small repairs excluding any major damages which may incur substantial costs.
4. The billing of late cancellation fees will no longer be an issue or added step in cancelling a housing assignment. Likewise, if a prospective student never enrolls then there would be no outstanding bill following their withdrawal. This will allow the billing office to no longer have to refund hundreds of students deposits every summer nor keep students accounts held if small charges need to be applied to accounts. The billing process will be much smoother now for MSU and the students.

No late cancellation fee will be needed with change to new application fee. In the past, students who cancelled their assignment lost their deposit and also were charged a \$250 late cancellation fee after the deadline. Under this new application fee, a late cancellation would not be incurred thus leading to less of a financial impact should a student need to not attend MSU.

While the change from a fee may cause some applicants to delay in submitting their materials; it should mean that when applications are received they will be likely new students of MSU. This will assist greatly in projecting actual enrollment and resident occupancy for each term rather than trying to estimate the number of withdrawn applications which may occur every year. The fee will ultimately improve processes for multiple MSU offices and reduce

complaints from customers from past processes which often included charges to student accounts.

There were additional questions from representatives during the meeting and Committee Chair McDaniel stated she would contact Dr. Summerlin with the follow-up questions. Dr. Summerlin's **SECOND RESPONSE** is as follows: ***When can you pay the fee online?*** The application went live last week and students can pay online using the application system.

Is this fee a one-time fee per student? It is a one-time fee as long as the student stays living on-campus from semester to semester. For example, a student who changes status from a resident to commuter to live off-campus and then wants to return to live on-campus during a later semester would need to pay the fee again.

Does the fee go into the housing budget or the general fund? My understanding is this fee does not go into the housing budget. Madonna may need to answer this question if specific budget information is needed.

NOTE: All submitted Staff Concerns may be seen in their entirety, along with the corresponding response, on the Staff Congress Portal site. Login to the Portal site, go to Employee Services, select Staff Congress, and then choose the Past Staff Concerns button. There will be a listing by month and year of the Staff Concerns from which you may choose to review.

Sustainability Committee

* **Representative Niehoff** had no report to submit.

Other Reports

Staff Regent Report: Shannon Harr

Staff Regent Harr reported the BOR met last week for the quarterly meeting. Items discussed during the meeting included: Accepted the First Quarter Financial Report and Amend the Operating Budget, Ratify 2016-2018 Biennial Budget Request, Adopt Resolution Authorizing a Trust Agreement for the Refunding of MSU General Receipts Obligations, 2007 Series A (this basically means they refinanced debts at a better rate—most likely the residence hall debt). Staff Regent Harr told representatives that all BOR agenda minutes could be found on the website, go to A-Z and choose “Board of Regents.” If anyone has a question or concern, please do not hesitate to email or call Staff Regent Harr to discuss. Staff Regent Harr stated he meets with President Andrews prior to the Board meetings to discuss employee concerns, as the Faculty and Student Regents do. Staff Regent Harr also informed representatives there was an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* regarding athletic subsidies and MSU was mentioned, not in a favorable light. Representative Fletcher gave an explanation of how the information was gathered and showed costs associated with athletics (such as utilities for buildings) that were not necessarily spent towards student athlete scholarship, aid, etc., but were counted in the total expenditures associated with our Athletics programs. There was a question from a representative regarding Dr. Andrews's bonus this year. Staff Regent Harr stated to his knowledge Dr. Andrews received \$150,000 retention bonus funded by the Foundation from private funds. This retention bonus was negotiated by the Board some time ago. This retention bonus was put into place before Staff Regent Harr took his position as Staff Regent, but he indicated he could try to find additional information if representatives requested. Representatives asked if Staff Regent Harr could find more information on the background regarding the bonus—if it was for simply staying in University employment; are other conditions attached to receiving the bonus; how is the bonus paid—in cash or annuities? Staff Regent Harr indicated he would try to find answers in past minutes and report at the January meeting. Representatives also asked if there was discussion on how the new governor taking office will affect Performance Funding for MSU. Staff Regent Harr indicated he felt we would hear more from Frankfort in the next couple of months as the new governor begins his tenure, but overall state funding in general is not looking promising.

Human Resources Report: Harold Nally

Harold Nally reported that Open Enrollment had closed but was still being discussed. He stated he received Jerel's email and would like the opportunity to provide answers to some of the questions presented. On the requested comparison of MSU and sister institutions benefits/costs: Mr. Nally indicated he was reluctant to release that information yet because there is a need to ensure that we are comparing premium costs and plans that are similar. The plans must be comparable to compare apples to apples. Overall, MSU is not in the best spot, but we are not in the worst spot. As for the confusion on the cotinine testing: 11/30 was the last date but a few more dates were added due to high demand. The last date for testing was 12/3. As of now, the cotinine testing is closed. The 9.9% increase discrepancy: 9.9% is the increase we received from Anthem. Everyone who attended a meeting had the opportunity to ask questions about the increase. We had a \$750,000 deficit from the beginning because that money was cut out of the budget which created a 10% increase before considering the increase Anthem mandated. This is also a

stabilization year—our increases could have been worse. You also have to factor in the 75/25 split implementation in the final overall increase of health care premium costs. A representative commented the \$750,000 deficit was not due to premium costs, it was a unilateral decision made by Administration without input from those affected the most by it. Another representative stated a concern that it appears single employees are taking the burden of health care costs as compared to married employees who do not pay a premium at all. Further explanation as to why married employees do not pay a premium ensued. As each individual employee is entitled to a single contribution, the combined two single contributions of married employees exceeds the costs for the married employee's policy, thus no premium is due of two married employees. Another representative wanted to know if the Affordable Healthcare Act contributed to the rising costs. Mr. Nally stated it had an impact, as all health care costs were increasing. Mr. Nally further explained the reason why the life insurance was switched from Hartford to Minnesota Life. Due to Hartford's issuance of death benefits in the past five years, Hartford increased their premiums accordingly and a bid was let out for this benefit. After the bidding process, the contract was awarded to Minnesota Life which implements an age-band premium system. A representative stated that again, this was a unilateral decision that was made by Administration because historically on the Employee Benefits Committee (campus-wide committee), the members had always voted the younger employees would support the older employees by not having the premiums based on age. Mr. Nally stated that any employee who has signed up for life insurance and shops the outside market and finds a more reasonable price will be allowed to leave the University-offered life insurance policy they signed up for during open enrollment. Mr. Nally further stated Minnesota Life had given a verbal commitment that if MSU decided to renew with their company next year, the premiums would not be based on claims. Representatives asked if there would be changes to the Wellness Points in the upcoming year. Shayla Dunn stated there would be changes, but those changes had not been worked out yet. Since this past year was the first year of MSU being on the Wellness Portal, it was a learning curve for everyone involved. HR is working in conjunction with Cerner to come up with a new point system and other features, but most likely will not be able to meet until the beginning of the spring semester. One feature that will be added in the upcoming year: Employees will be able to upload preventative care visits to the portal instead of emailing them to the livewell email address and HR uploading them. The Steps portion (if you count steps of activity) will also change. A question was asked "How many people participate in the Wellness points?" Neither Mr. Nally nor Ms. Dunn had that information with them. Another question was asked regarding AFLAC coming to campus. Mr. Nally indicated AFLAC had been on campus December 3 and 4. Employees may still call the AFLAC representative as he has until the end of December to enroll participants.

Cabinet Report: Beth Patrick

VP Patrick was not present and no report was submitted.

OLD BUSINESS: Representative Esposito gave an update on the Coat Drive. Rep. Esposito stated there had been a lot of donations made and so far 5 students had stopped by to pick out items. . Rep. Esposito predicts as the weather turns colder, more students will most likely utilize the donations.

NEW BUSINESS: NONE

UPCOMING EAGLE EVENTS

- Monday, December 7 – Friday, December 11: FINAL EXAMS
- Saturday, December 12: Commencement
- Monday, December 21 – Friday, January 1: Winter Break and New Year's Holiday
- Monday, January 4: MSU Offices Open Regular Schedule
- Monday, January 11: Next Staff Congress meeting 1:00 p.m. (Riggle Room, ADUC)
- Wednesday, January 13: Convocation
- Monday, January 18: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Classes or Office Hours)
- Tuesday, January 19: Classes Begin
- Representative LaFontaine gave the new holiday hours for the Recreation Center. The hours are posted on the doors and are listed on the Recreation and Wellness website. The Recreation Center will also be getting a new director in January.